

# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY FOR PARK PLANNING**

**DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
CITY OF RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA**

**April 2012**

## ***Introduction***

*The purpose of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department is to actively encourage, provide, promote, and protect quality leisure, recreation and cultural opportunities, facilities and environments that are essential for the enhancement of the lives of the citizens of Raleigh and surrounding municipalities.*

### **Preamble**

The ultimate goal of the following three documents is to ensure an effective and efficient process that fairly and equitably maximizes citizen input and support for the planning and development of the City of Raleigh's park system.

The purpose of the Public Participation **Guidelines** for Park Planning is to present and describe best practice formats, methods, and techniques for the Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department and Raleigh citizens to work in concert to plan, design, and develop park lands, greenways and recreation facilities.

The Guidelines form the basis for Raleigh's Public Participation **Policy** for Park Planning, which outlines eleven principles of public participation, the responsible parties for the actions associated with public participation in park planning activities, and the Raleigh City Council's policy statement for citizen involvement in park planning.

The Parks and Recreation Public Participation **Manual for Park Planning** establishes procedures for the Parks and Recreation Department to reach a Council-adopted Master Plan, Master Plan Amendment, Revised Master Plan, and System Integration Plan for undeveloped parks. It is a step-by-step manual to assist staff in any effort to inform, consult with, involve and collaborate with the public in park planning and development efforts.

**DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
CITY OF RALEIGH  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY FOR PARK PLANNING**

## **1. Purpose**

Residents have a role and share responsibility for creating quality recreation and cultural opportunities, facilities and environments in the City of Raleigh. The purpose of this policy is to describe the roles and responsibilities of Residents and the Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department in working in concert to plan, design, and develop parks, greenways and recreation facilities. It describes the situations in which the advice, aspirations and concerns of residents are reflected in planning and development decisions, and specifies circumstances in which the Parks and Recreation Department does not seek public input. It describes a set of principles and minimum provisions for public notification and comment that govern public participation processes organized by the Parks and Recreation Department. This policy document is associated with the following City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation planning documents: *Public Participation Guidelines for Park Planning*, *Public Participation Manual for Park Planning*, and *Getting Involved in Park Planning Participation Sheets* wherein best practices, operating procedures, and roles and responsibilities for specific process formats and procedures are described. This Policy document and the associated documents listed here replace Resolution (2003) -735, "A Resolution to Revise the Process for Approval of Master Plans for Park and Related Projects".

## **2. Policy Statement**

It is the policy of the Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department, in carrying out its mission:

- (a) To invite and organize opportunities for direct public participation in carrying out its responsibilities for planning, design, development, major renovation, and any proposed projects that would, in the judgment of the Parks Director, substantially modify the property's use or appearance.
- (b) To adhere to the principles of public participation as described in this policy.
- (c) To provide sufficient organizational resources and capacity in the form of skilled and knowledgeable staff of professional planners, project managers, consultants, and others to every public participation event and process organized by the department.
- (d) To manage public participation processes for park planning effectively by following best practices as defined and described in the *Raleigh Parks and*

*Recreation Department Public Participation Guidelines for Park Planning and the Raleigh Parks and Recreation Public Participation Manual for Park Planning.*

- (e) To provide early and thorough notification of proposals and projects through a variety of means to users, user groups, neighborhoods, neighborhood groups, and other interested people.
- (f) To complete public participation processes by notifying involved and interested people and groups of final decisions, the impact of their input on those decisions, and the reasons for them.
- (g) To commit to learning and improving public participation processes by engaging in self-assessment, process correction, and updates to policies and processes every five years.
- (h) To pursue a consensus recommendation for all master plan actions (new Plans, Amendments, and Revisions) utilizing a planning committee approved by City Council.

### 3. Public Participation Principles

The Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department will adhere to the following principles when engaging residents in public participation processes:

#### ***Principles in Process Design***

- (a) **Make Processes Inclusive.** The Department shall plan, design and manage public participation events and processes to include credible representatives of the full spectrum of parties who are interested in or will be affected by a decision.
- (b) **Design Processes Collaboratively.** The Department shall design public participation processes collaboratively with those participating in them. This means that the Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board (PRGAB) will be engaged early in the design process, potential participants shall be identified and brought into the planning process as early as possible, and that ongoing processes shall be adapted as needed to effectively engage the capabilities and needs of all participants.
- (c) **Make Processes Transparent.** The Department shall manage public involvement processes so that participants have a clear idea of the purpose of the process and who is responsible for organizing it, how the process will unfold, how decisions will be made and by whom, their role in the decision process, and how their ideas and concerns will be integrated into the final decision.
- (d) **Time Processes in Relation to Decisions.** The Department shall plan and manage public participation processes so that their outputs are timely with regard to City Council decisions.

### ***Principles in Process Management***

- (e) **Promote Full Participation.** The Department shall manage public participation processes to give all involved a fair voice and to benefit from differences in perspectives, approaches, backgrounds, and culture.
- (f) **Promote Mutual Understanding.** The Department shall manage processes so that residents derive a greater understanding and appreciation of the perspective of other residents and the Department, and accept one another's needs and goals as legitimate. This requires a process that allows people to freely exchange information about what is important to them.
- (g) **Develop Inclusive Solutions.** The Department shall design processes that advance opportunities to build creative, integrative solutions. The key to building integrative outcomes is to provide the means for people to make their interests known and understood.
- (h) **Share Responsibility for Decisions.** The Department shall manage public involvement processes that encourage residents to share in the responsibility for decisions by being able to weigh in on choices that are important to them. Responsibility goes both ways. Sharing decision responsibility obligates residents to find solutions to shared problems rather than simply fighting against alternatives they dislike.

### ***Principles in Information Integration***

- (i) **Ensure Full and Equal Access to Relevant Information.** The Department shall make information that is relevant to park and recreation planning accessible to all residents who wish to access it as allowed by public records laws and consistent with City of Raleigh policies.
- (j) **Ensure Transparency of Information and Analysis.** The Department shall make Information and analyses accessible and understandable to all participants. Assumptions and uncertainties about information made available by the Department shall be made explicit.
- (k) **Anticipate Information Needs.** The Department shall design and manage public participation processes that provide opportunities for residents to define the information they need.

## **4. Parks and Recreation Department Processes Covered under this Policy**

- (a) Park and Recreation Site Master Planning, Plan Revision, and Plan Amendment
- (b) Park and Recreation Facility Design and Development (Schematic Design)
- (c) System Integration Planning
- (d) Park and Recreation Facility major renovation and redevelopment

- (e) Ad Hoc Studies such as Feasibility (of a specific project or action), Costs/Revenue, or a particular singular issue charge from City Council;
- (f) Strategic Planning (city-wide topic such as aquatics, cemetery, dog parks, invasive species management, etc.);
- (g) Comprehensive Park System Planning

## 5. People Affected by the Public Participation Policy

- (a) Park Neighbors
- (b) Park Users (existing and potential)
- (c) User Organizations and public interest organizations
- (d) Neighborhood Groups and Homeowner Associations
- (e) Citizen Advisory Councils
- (f) Parks, Recreation and Greenways Advisory Board
- (g) Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation
- (h) Other City of Raleigh Departments
- (i) Other government agencies

## 6. Planning and Public Participation Actions and Responsibilities

Figure 1, “Planning Activities and Responsibilities” is a visual aid to the following actions and associated responsibilities related to public participation in parks and recreation planning activities. As part of initiating and authorizing a planning action (A. and B. below) the staff will provide a summary of the planning activity context and the results of the *Public Participation Process Selection Guide (from the Guidelines)* as a basis for proposing a public participation format and pursuing selection of a consultant (C. below).

### **A. Initiate a Request for a Planning Action**

Recommendation to include a planning action in the Capital Improvement Program, staff or Park Board work plan may come from a variety of sources including City Council, citizen request or petition, the Parks and Recreation Department or the PRGAB. The planning action is initiated by requesting authorization from the City Council.

**Responsible Entity:** Parks and Recreation Director

**Implementation:** Design Development Administrator, Sr. Planner, Planner II

### **B. Authorize Planning Action**

The City Council retains the right to require and approve a planning action for any and all park properties.

**Responsible Entity:** City Council

**Implementation:** Parks and Recreation Director

**C. Select Consultant**

The City's Administrative Regulation 502-4 *Retention of Professional and Other Services* will be followed by the Parks and Recreation Department staff and the City Manager for drafting a request for qualifications and selection of the project consultant. Final selection is subject to the approval of a contract scope and amount by the City Council. The scope will include the expectations for project communication and the proposed public participation format.

**Responsible Entity:** City Council

**Implementation:** Parks and Recreation Director, Design Development Administrator, Sr. Planner

**D. Design and Plan Public Participation Processes**

The planning team, consisting of staff and consultant if applicable, conducts a Situation Assessment of the planning issues and develops a matrix of stakeholder issues, identifies the appropriate public participation format, and designs a context-appropriate process. The Situation Assessment will also consult with the stakeholders how best to ensure their participation. This background information will be presented to the PRGAB in a public meeting for review.

**Responsible Entity:** Parks and Recreation Director

**Implementation:** Design Development Administrator, Sr. Planner, Planner II

**Review:** PRGAB

**E. Approve Public Participation Process**

Prior to initiation of the planning activity, the methods for involving the public in planning, design and development decisions are approved by the City Council. The background information developed for PRGAB review will be provided with any PRGAB input.

**Responsible Entity:** City Council

**Implementation:** City Manager, Parks and Recreation Director

**F. Promote Public Participation Processes and Notify Public of Planning Activities**

The Department notifies stakeholders of the upcoming planning activity and provides information about participation opportunities.

**Responsible Entity:** Sr. Planner

**Implementation:** Planner II, Planner I, Consultant

**G. Initiate Public Participation Process**

The Department initiates the public participation process through active outreach with area residents and interested parties. Commencement may occur through an initial public meeting, meetings with interest groups, open houses, or other methods of face-to-face interaction. Residents may provide the department initial input such as local knowledge of natural or historic features and community desires. At this meeting, additional stakeholders and potential planning committee members may be identified. Based on citizen feedback, the Department may elect to redesign the public participation process, and repeat steps D-G.

**Responsible Entity:** Residents, Design Development Administrator

**Implementation:** Sr. Planner, Planner II, Consultant

#### **H. Select Planning Committee**

The PRGAB, after review of the assessment information, including a stakeholder matrix, gathered by Department staff, recommends membership and composition of the Planning Committee to the City Council for appointment. The PRGAB will at this time recommend their liaison(s) for the Planning Committee, and confirm their role as a participant.

**Responsible Entity:** PRGAB; City Council

**Implementation:** Design/Development Administrator, Sr. Planner, Planner II

#### **I. Conduct Public/Committee Meetings**

The Department organizes public meetings pursuant to the public participation process approved for the planning activity. The meetings are conducted in accordance with the *Public Participation Guidelines for Park Planning* and the *Public Participation Manual for Park Planning*. The outcome of the public participation process will be a draft document (a plan, study, park and/or, facility design) to be reviewed and approved by the PRGAB and City Council.

**Responsible Entity:** Residents, Design Development Administrator

**Implementation:** Consultant, Sr. Planner, Planner II, Planner I, Division Superintendent(s), individual program directors (Arts, Athletics, Nature, Urban Forestry, Specialized Recreation Services, etc.) as needed

#### **J. Generate a Draft Plan/Study/Design**

Using the input of Residents generated through public participation and other data relevant to the planning process, the project's internal Design Resource Team develops a draft planning document (a plan, study and/or, facility design) in accordance with the *Public Participation Guidelines for Park Planning* and the *Public Participation Manual for Park Planning*.

**Responsible Entity:** Residents, Design Development Administrator

**Implementation:** Consultant, Sr. Planner, Planner II, Planner I



**K. Organize a Public Review of Draft Plan/Study/Design and Public Meeting**

The Department provides opportunities for a wider audience to review and comment on the draft plan/study/design in accordance with the *Public Participation Guidelines for Park Planning* and the *Public Participation Manual for Park Planning*. In addition, the Department organizes a public meeting to receive comment on the draft plan/study/design. Concurrently, City administration reviews the draft plan/study/design through interdepartmental review.

**Responsible Entity:** Residents, Design Development Administrator

**Implementation:** Consultant, Sr. Planner, Planner II, Planner I

**L. Planning Committee Recommends Draft Plan/Study/Design**

The Planning Committee reviews the comments received through the public review and addresses them to produce a final recommendation for the plan/study/design. This recommendation and supporting documents is forwarded to the PRGAB for consideration.

**Responsible Entity:** Planning Committee, Design Development Administrator

**Implementation:** Consultant, Sr. Planner, Planner II, Planner I

**M. PRGAB Review and Recommendation of Plan/Study/Design**

The PRGAB considers the proposed plan/study/design. The public will be given the opportunity to comment on the draft plan/study/design to the PRGAB at a meeting advertised and organized for that opportunity. The PRGAB reports its recommendation on the plan/study/design to the City Council. The Committee's Plan and all oral and written comments will be transmitted to the City Council with the PRGAB recommendation.

**Responsible Entity:** PRGAB

**Implementation:** Parks and Recreation Director

**N. Adopt Final Plans**

City Council receives the PRGAB's recommendation on the plan/study/design. Final approval rests with City Council. The Council may choose to return the plan/study/design to the PRGAB for additional revision of key elements. If a Consensus Committee process, the Committee will remain in existence until dissolved by the City Council.

**Responsible Entity:** City Council

**Implementation:** Parks and Recreation Director

**O. Evaluate Public Participation Processes and Outcomes**

The Department evaluates the planning activity and public participation process to help track progress and make improvements to future processes.

**Responsible Entity:** Parks and Recreation Director  
**Implementation:** Stakeholders, Design Development Administrator,  
Consultant

***7. Notification of Site Development or Alteration (System Integration Plan; Master Plan Development, Revision, or Amendment; Major Facility Renovation or Redevelopment), Planning Meetings, and Studies***

The following notification procedures and timelines shall be undertaken during the initiation of the planning, major renovation and redevelopment action, and prior to recommendation to the PRGAB. The Department will employ a variety of notification methods, including posting signs, direct notification via postal mail and electronic notification (emails, etc.), notices in newspapers and other printed media, and notices on websites. The type of notification method used will be at the discretion of the Department Director.

- 1) A notification will be provided at the site 30 days before the initial public meeting.
- 2) Meeting and project information/background shall be made available at least two weeks prior to the first meeting to the City Council, PRGAB, owners of adjoining properties, registered neighborhood groups, including CACs, and registered park support groups within an approximately ½ mile radius for neighborhood park, an approximately 2 mile radius for community parks, or a more extensive distribution for City-wide greenway, metro park or special projects such as Nature Preserves. Other interested groups as suggested by the Public Affairs or Community Services departments, such as the Historic Districts Commission, the Appearance Commission, the Human Relations Advisory Commission, and Mayor's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities , and any interested individuals who have requested to be informed of meetings and project information shall also be notified.
- 3) Meeting and project information will be posted at community centers and at other sites suggested by the Public Affairs Department. The PRGAB, City Council, Master Plan Team and Committee Members (once identified), or City Administration all may recommend individuals or groups who may have an interest in the park to receive notifications and mailings.
- 4) Project and press releases shall be posted on the City of Raleigh website at least one week prior to any meetings, with appropriate linkages to other websites as suggested by the Public Affairs Department.
- 5) The Public Meeting notice will be publicized as required by City Council, the open meetings law, and will be more extensively publicized where deemed appropriate by the process participants or staff, utilizing appropriate consultation from the Public Affairs department.

## **8. Public Comment**

All opportunities for public participation organized by the Parks and Recreation Department for planning, design, development, renovation and other proposed projects identified in Section 4 must include opportunities for open public comment at a public forum where residents may attend in person and by written comment. At a minimum, the opportunity for public comment will be provided:

- 1) At the initiation of the project or action;
- 2) Upon completion of a Draft Master Plan, Draft Master Plan Amendment, or Draft Master Plan Revision;
- 3) Upon completion of a Draft System Integration Plan, Draft Strategic Plan, Draft Comprehensive Plan, or draft ad hoc study.
- 4) At the Schematic Design phase of project construction planning.

## **9. Activities Exempt From This Policy**

While the Department recognizes that public participation may substantially increase the effectiveness of a project, some activities may be exempt from this policy. The following actions or activities undertaken by the Parks and Recreation Department may be exempt from this policy and are subject to review by the City Attorney:

- 1) Proposals or projects undertaken for legal or safety reasons such as deed restrictions, safety or code compliance;
- 2) Any proposal or action for which the public participation process is defined and described elsewhere by ordinance, policy, financial or partnership agreements;
- 3) Any events protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

## **10. Glossary of Terms**

- A. **Capital Improvement Program (CIP):** The City's long range funding plan for major facilities and studies or planning efforts. Adoption of the CIP is on an annual-fiscal year basis. The CIP is divided into Phase 1 (years 1-5, where year 1 is the adopted Fiscal Year funding) and Phase 2, which forecasts years 6-10.
- B. **Major Renovation and Redevelopment:** Action that, in the judgment of the Parks Director, substantially alters the program, function, or use by the public of a facility or site.

- C. **Master Plan:** A long range plan for development and use for an individual park site that includes a Program Statement guided by a statement of vision, a description of elements and depicted by a conceptual graphic plan.
- D. **Master Plan Amendment:** A new use or arrangement of uses that differs from the adopted master plan can be considered for the park if it complements, contributes to and does not detract from the Program Statement (vision, elements) of the park.
- E. **Master Plan Revision:** If City Council determines a Master Plan is no longer current, effective, or supported by the community as a whole a new Master Plan effort may be instituted.
- F. **Planning Committee:** A Council-approved committee structure that is membership-specific and operates under the Public Participation Policy for Park Planning. Can be referred to as "ad hoc" or a task force with the intent to serve for the resolution of a single issue or planning action; as Advisory as charged by City Council authority; or Public Leadership Group when used to seek consensus recommendations.
- G. **Public Participation:** The process by which public concerns, needs and values are incorporated into Parks and Recreation decision making.
- H. **Schematic Design:** Establishes the general scope, scale and relationships among the program components identified in the Master Plan. The schematic design carries the project to the level of detail required to identify any critical issue not covered in the Master Plan. Objective is to develop a clearly defined, feasible concept while exploring the most promising alternative design solutions.
- I. **System Integration Planning:** An interim plan for undeveloped park sites that addresses Comprehensive Plan correlation, documents City Council's acquisition and intent, begins a process of complete site inventory for natural and cultural features, and recommends interim management actions.

**Figure 1. Raleigh Parks and Recreation Planning Activities and Responsibilities**

